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ABSTRACT

Reviewing the history and status of accountability efforts in the California Community Colleges (CCC), this document describes three accountability models. Following a brief history of accountability in the state, the accountability model established by 1988's Assembly Bill 1725 is discussed, indicating that colleges are required to report data on student access, student success, student satisfaction, staff composition, and fiscal condition. This section also indicates that the goal of the model is to make data available to all the colleges for use in improving programs and services. The next section focuses on the "CC Family" model, or the local accountability models developed in the state's community colleges, indicating that they examine measures related to access, retention, occupational success, transfer, degree and certificates, and remediation. The third section describes a "CC Critics" model that could be used by agencies outside of the CCCs to gauge effectiveness, suggesting that a "cost per outcome" strategy be used to gauge the colleges' cost-effectiveness in meeting statewide priorities. For each model, sample data from a typical institution in a multi-college district are used to illustrate results. The final section presents conclusions related to the need to work with both internal and external models, acknowledge institutional weaknesses, examine alternatives, and adopt a performance-based funding model that would provide fiscal incentives for improvements. (YKH)

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Inside Out: Accountability and Performance in the California Community Colleges

Janis Cox Jones

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INSIDE OUT:
ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE
IN THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Janis Cox Jones

The Basics of Accountability

Almost a decade ago, in October 1986, a joint task force of the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges and the California Community College Trustees produced a policy paper on governance and accountability that was endorsed by the seventy districts statewide. In the foreword, the authors discussed the public perception that the 106 community colleges were not appropriately accountable, and the then-ongoing reassessment of the state's master plan for higher education. "What we offer is not a major change in the governance structure, since we find no fundamental weakness in the broad design for our state's community colleges," they stated. "However, we do find a problem with the matter of accountability within the existing governance structure." (*A New Partnership in Governance*, Cox Coffey and Lovas for CEOCCC and CCCT, October 1986.) The paper set forth two key principles: building on the strengths of the community colleges, and emphasizing accountability for results. It analyzed the accountability problem and provided a model for establishing a new system of accountability.

The CEOs and Trustees called for the Board of Governors and its staff in the State Chancellor's Office to "become less internally focused on procedures and compliance reporting, and more externally focused on such key elements as advocacy, planning, development, research, policy analysis, and evaluation and distribution of results." The paper recommended that the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office monitor the performance of the community colleges statewide through an integrated Management Information System (MIS) that would provide data on key system performance indicators to both the local and state levels. In addition, the proposed accountability system would evaluate the fiscal and educational effectiveness of the colleges "in achieving the desired results according to outcomes measures developed cooperatively with local districts."

At the local level, the Trustees and CEOs recommended that districts and colleges "set priorities for academic programs, support services, staffing needs, fiscal and facilities resources, program development, and evaluation of results." In addition, they recommended establishment of minimum standards of student performance, and that districts "assess results, including student achievement and progress."

This paper was discussed widely statewide, and reflected some of the discussions of the independent Commission for the Review of the California Master Plan for Higher Education, which had just completed its reassessment study of the California Community Colleges in March 1986. The Commission's report, *The Challenge of Change: A Reassessment of the California Community Colleges*, made a series of recommendations aimed at improving the accountability of the community colleges for their key mission priorities of transfer and vocational education, in addition to the areas of remedial education, non-credit adult education, and fee-based community services. These recommendations included the establishment of a transfer core curriculum, identification of vocational education programs that showed evidence of substantial gender and ethnic underrepresentation, development of "2+2+2" programs leading to vocational BA/BS degrees. Also recommended was the establishment of a 30-unit limit on remedial coursework, with a concomitant policy that enrollment in remedial courses be mandated based on the recommended student assessment, counseling and placement program (termed "matriculation"). The Commission intended these recommendations to respond to the public perception that the community colleges were "chasing ADA" by offering courses of dubious quality while generating high student contact hours, in effect moving thousands of students through the system with few identifiable outcomes.

Under great discussion, both at the Master Plan Commission and among the senior postsecondary segments (the University of California and the California State University), was the recommendation that the community colleges, both individually and as a system, engage in institutional research and evaluation. Now commonplace, that recommendation was controversial at the time, first for suggesting that the community colleges had the responsibility for conducting research of any kind, and second for suggesting that they had the ability to do so. The Commission's recommendation even included an argument for funding the accountability research at both state and local levels:

> Institutional research is essential to determine which types of programs work best with which students under what circumstances, and to ensure the wisest use of public funds in meeting student and community needs. There is relatively little statewide institutional research available to evaluate the effectiveness of Community College transfer, vocational, or remedial programs, which are of particular concern to this Commission. If these programs are to be implemented successfully and cost-effectively, they must be accompanied by research and evaluation from the start, to strengthen these programs as they develop as well as to evaluate their ultimate merit. Significant additional funds will be needed for this research.

The Master Plan Commission's recommendations were echoed in the report of the Legislature's Joint Committee for Review of the Master Plan in Higher Education, *California Faces ... California's Future* (June 1988). The Joint Committee's report was in response to the final report of the Master Plan Commission, *The Master Plan Renewed: Unity, Equity, Quality, and Efficiency in California Postsecondary Education* (July 1987), which covered all of postsecondary education, after having initially reviewed the community college segment. The Joint Committee's report included a section on "Assessment, Accountability, and Incentive Funding" that examined the need for two kinds of accountability systems: one at the state level to gauge how the public segments were performing with

respect to specific priorities; and one at the local level, based on the need "for the good teacher to know more" and rooted in the desire "to know better what are the real results of education in the lives of students." Funding was also tied to the accountability system, and the phrase "performance-based funding" was used:

> The policy issue is, at first glance, relatively straightforward: can the state or the institutions devise a system (or systems), through which educators might better measure their success in the education and development of students? Whether assessed in quantitative output terms (retention rates, graduation rates, job placements), or qualitative judgments by students concerning the value of their education, assessment offers the prospect of assisting educators in understanding some of the effects of their work. These processes could also assist students in recognizing which institutions and programs offer them the best opportunity for their own learning and development.
>
> From the perspective of California's policy-makers, assessment could offer the prospect of judging some part of what is "produced" through California's higher education systems, and performance-based funding would hold out the prospect of linking funding to preferred outcomes. Both this Joint Committee and the Master Plan Commission have at different times suggested the value of tying some part of funding to performance measures.

These policy papers and reports, by the Trustees and CEOs of the community colleges, by the Master Plan Commission, and by the Legislature's Joint Committee, set the stage for enactment of "reform" legislation that included many of the accountability-focused recommendations. That legislation, Assembly Bill 1725, was passed into law in 1988, and set the stage for development of a statewide community college accountability system.

The AB 1725 Accountability Model

Assembly Bill 1725 established the California Community Colleges as a statewide system and charged the Board of Governors and the state Chancellor's Office with developing an accountability structure "that is based on student outcomes and that holds districts accountable for results rather than input measures." (*Implementation of the AB 1725 Accountability System*, Board of Governors, September 8, 1994.) The bill, now technically Education Code Section 71020.5, requires the Board to "develop and implement a comprehensive community college educational and fiscal accountability system" and to produce an accountability report. According to the Board of Governors' report, the initial design called for the centralized collection and reporting of data in five key areas: student access, student success, student satisfaction, staff composition, and fiscal condition. Colleges were to report their data to the Chancellor's Office via the new Management Information System; special funding was provided to the Chancellor's Office to first pilot test and then implement the system on a statewide basis.

The Board of Governors' report documents the growing number of federal and state programs that include accountability requirements, as well as accountability efforts in other states that specify performance indicators for public postsecondary institutions, often with some form of performance-based funding attached. While the report does not specifically mention the possibility of performance-based funding in California, it has been discussed in other statewide venues, such as in the Legislative Analyst's budget analysis for the community colleges. According to the cover letter (January 18, 1995) from Chancellor Mertes, "the 1995 legislative year brings continued interest in accountability for schools and colleges. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for us to have adequate data to support policy decisions and justify funding." Accordingly, in addition to the statewide accountability report prepared by the Chancellor's Office, each college received a report of its own accountability results for use in local program evaluation, research and accreditation activities.

For purposes of this paper, we will use actual data from a typical college in a multi-college district, which we will assign the name "College X", to provide an example of various accountability model results. In addition to the Chancellor's Office AB 1725 accountability report published by the Board of Governors in September 1994, each college receives a report on its own results, based on the data provided through MIS reports. The College X-specific report includes data only on student access and success, but provides this for three fall semesters ('91, '92, '93).

Student access, the first measure, is defined as the number and proportion of students enrolling compared to their proportion in the general population, the goal being to overcome the "underrepresentation" of particular ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the general population data is statewide "census" data based on the 1993 population projections done by the Department of Finance's Population Research Unit. Finance's projections are useful for the state-level aggregate analysis of how community colleges are doing, but are not localized. The projections also list as "not available" the percentages for American Indian, Asian and Filipino. Data analyzing College X's ethnic percentages compared to those of the surrounding communities based on ZIP code analyses is more useful in this area. College X, like most community colleges statewide, attracts and serves more ethnic minorities and women that in its surrounding population; it is therefore difficult to continue to call most of the ethnic groups "underrepresented." In point of fact, in many community colleges, only whites are represented in proportions below their population percentages.

The first student success measure is "transition from high school" and counts the percent of high school graduates enrolling for the first time in a credit course within two years after graduation. While the numbers and percents of these "first-time freshmen" are provided for the three fall semesters by gender and ethnicity, it is not easy to determine whether we are above or below the statewide average, or what that average is. Similar problems exist with each of the other student success measure tables: the "persistence" table gives the number of students staying from fall to spring, again with percentages by gender and ethnicity, but no analysis is provided of what proportion of students persisted at either the statewide or local level. Also, no analysis is done of the relative retention rates of various ethnic groups, which was done at College X. Persistence data by ethnic groups is critical to determining whether a college has retention problems in general, and with specific target groups in particular.

The initial statewide AB 1725 accountability report provides evidence that the MIS data are becoming increasingly available and even reliable. There is no better way to improve data than to publish it and let colleges see what they are sending. Discussions with state Chancellor's Office staff indicate this is in fact what is happening, and future reports will include more and better data and analyses.

The Legislature's response to the AB 1725 accountability report has not been entirely positive, and the Legislative Analyst has been particularly critical. Supplemental budget language written in the Legislative Analyst's Office in July 1995 requires the Chancellor's Office to: define all possible performance measures for the five key areas (student access, success and satisfaction, staff composition, and fiscal condition); to explain what they measure and mean; to determine to what extent data are available for the measures and how valid those data are; and to answer what it would cost to get the data into a useable state. The deadline for the report is November 1996. The Legislative Analyst's support for these requirements covered some twenty pages in the Budget Analysis, and discussed openly the issue of performance-based funding being tied to the performance measures. The first draft of the supplemental budget language included withholding a specific percentage of either growth or COLA funding, to then be distributed based on local district and college performance on specified measures. This language was deleted. The Chancellor's Office staff argued that, before tying funding to the measures, it was important to start using and testing the MIS accountability data for validity and effectiveness as performance measures over the next several years. The idea is to get local college staff to begin using the data to improve programs and services, rather than to spend time figuring out how to construct (or reconstruct) their data to gain funding.

The Legislature is clearly intent on having better accountability for results in those areas it feels are the community colleges' central mission as defined in AB 1725: production of transfer students for UC and CSU, training and upgrading of students for employment, and provision of remedial courses that move students into the regular academic or occupational programs. By setting clear priorities among the community colleges' various missions, the Legislature in AB 1725 gave a clear indication of what it considered important in 1988; six years later, they want to know what our results are in these areas. Our students, our communities, and we ourselves need to know the same answers.

The Internal or "CC Family" Model

AB 1725's statewide accountability system provides one externally imposed model, although as we have seen, the colleges themselves helped to design and enact the legislation. There is also the reality of our own local or internal models, which have a great similarity across the state. Taken together, these local models constitute the "CC Family" Model.

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In this internal model, we generally look at measures in six key areas:

Access — enrolling as many or more minorities as in the surrounding community;

Retention— the percentage of all students, or of first-time frosh students, staying enrolled from fall to spring, or fall to fall;

Occupational Success — student leavers reporting new jobs, salary increases, or advancement due to their CC classes; also occupational degrees or certificates earned;

Transfer— California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) counts of transfers to the UC or CSU systems; transfer rate measures like the ICC or Berman-Weiler rates, or the new transfer readiness rate; also longitudinal studies of success after transfer;

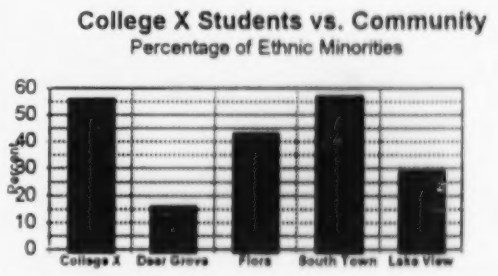
Degrees and Certificates — the number of degrees and certificates earned by students in a given year; and

Remediation — examples: remedial course completion rates, persistence rates, and performance in next class measures; also the proportion of students moving from remedial courses to AA-degree-level to university-level transfer courses.

Reading the published research from colleges statewide, many institutions are using these kinds of data to measure their effectiveness in meeting student and community needs. College X, has used such data for some time, and through development of a Student Tracking Data Base, they are able to answer such accountability questions.

So, how do we look? The following are some of our results based on these measures:

Access — College X, like many other community colleges, enjoys a larger proportion of ethnic minorities and women in its main campus student body than in its surrounding service area. However, the service area encompasses a number of different communities which have dramatically different socio-economic levels, and vary widely in the percentages of minorities. College X's Educational Centers have lower proportions of minorities (25% and 15% respectively), as do their service areas.



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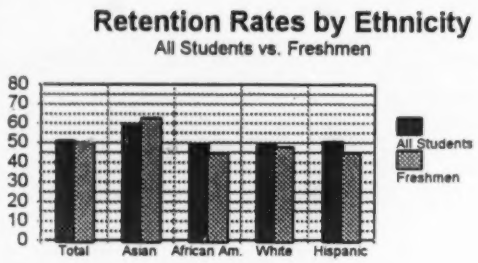
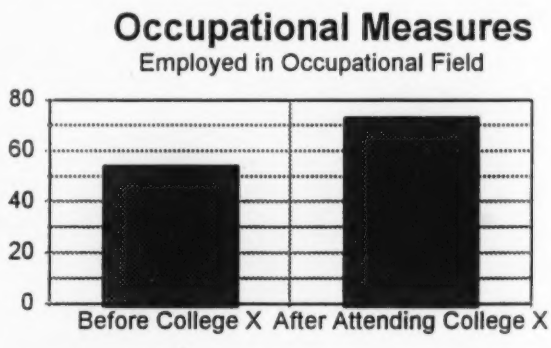
Retention — About 51% of all College X students stay from fall to spring; 45% of our first-time first-year students do so (Fall '94 to Spring '95 data). While there is less variation in retention rates by ethnic group (other than Asian) than might be expected, as can be seen in the graph at the right, losing one out of every two students from fall to spring poses an issue that is hard to ignore. College X research indicates that the overall GPA's of all students who left varied little from those who stayed (2.82 and 2.85 respectively). However, there were differences in leavers' GPA by ethnic group, with African American students at 2.29 compared to 2.61 for Hispanics, 2.66 for Asian students and 2.97 for whites. Among first-time freshmen, the differences in leavers' GPA (1.66) and that of those who stayed (2.14) was substantial, as were variations of leavers' GPAs by ethnic group (African Americans 0.85, Asians 1.35, Hispanics 1.45 and white 1.88). Given these data, most first-time freshmen students should be considered "high-risk".



Occupational Measures — Based on the College X's occupational student follow-up report, College X's response rate was 38% (530 students) and indicated that 73% of respondents (386) were employed at the time of the follow-up survey, compared to 54% (183) who were employed in the occupational field prior to enrolling. Forty-seven percent (156) said their job was directly or closely related to courses completed at College X. Twenty-four percent (50) reported they had transferred to a four-year college in response to why occupational area was not related to College X courses. Twenty-four percent of respondents working in a field related to their major (49) said courses helped them to obtain a job; 43% (90) to perform on present job; and 20% (42) to advance on the job. A recent study by Friedlander using EDD Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data showed a significant "value added" (higher wages) for those who stayed in community college and completed higher numbers of units or degrees and certificates. The author recommends combining the UI wage data with the Chancellor's Office MIS files and student files from UC and CSU and independent colleges, to provide a more accurate picture of occupationally-related outcomes. This information is now becoming available to local colleges for use in tracking employment outcomes, particularly for occupational students.



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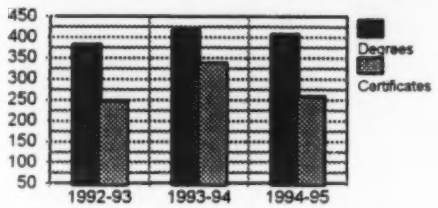
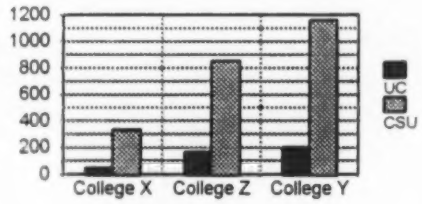
Degree/Certificate Measures — Using Fall 1995 data about the previous year, College X awarded 408 degrees and 259 certificates. This is a decrease of -2.7% in degrees and a decrease of -23.6% in certificates since 1993-94.

Degrees and Certificates Granted



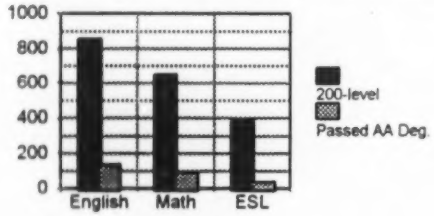
Transfer Measures — In 1993-94, the CPEC numbers show College X had 380 total transfers to the UC and CSU systems combined. Using a very rough transfer readiness measure of 56 or more transferable units completed by an entering cohort within eight semesters (four years), College X has approximately 3% or 334 students who achieved "transfer readiness" out of the total cohort. Clearly, many students transfer without taking 56 transferrable units here at College X, indicating either university eligibility from high school or units taken at another institution. Using the more arduous calculations of the Barr/Rasor "transfer readiness" rate endorsed by the statewide Community College Research and Planning Group, College X stood at 29.1% (of a comparative first-time freshman cohort), compared to College Y's 47.3%. Looking at the transfer phenomenon another way, College X comprises 25% of the district's enrollment, but accounts for only 11.3% of the district's UC transfers, and 14.2% of CSU transfers.

UC and CSU Transfers



Remediation Measures — Looking at the Fall 1991 cohort of students, we see that of the 855 students enrolled in English 200-level courses, only 137 (16%) ever passed English 57 over the subsequent four years. Of the 649 enrolled in Math 200-level courses, only 93 passed Math 51 (14%). Of the 387 enrolled in ESL 200-level courses, only 36 ever passed ESL 3 or 4 A/B (9%). This is a total of 266 students (with some duplication possible) moving successfully from remedial courses into the regular AA degree-level curriculum. Essentially, fewer than one out of six of our students ever move successfully from remedial courses in English, Math, or ESL into college-level courses in those areas.

Progress Thru Remedial Courses



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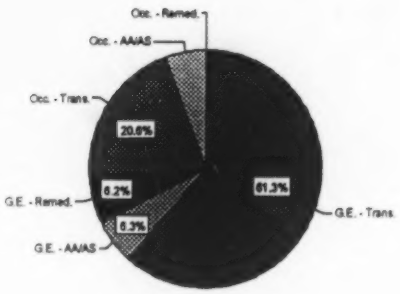
We have used these measures in the community college family for years, although we rarely publish them. With the increasing emphasis on accountability, more and more colleges are at least asking to examine these measures internally, to see whether what they are doing on behalf of students is working, and if not, to help measure changes as programs and approaches are altered. If we are bothered by our relatively poor outcomes in transfer, occupational education, degrees and certificates, or remedial progress, then we need to use these as baseline data to anchor our efforts to improve our student outcomes and our institutional performance. Above all, saying that we are "no worse than many other colleges" is not to address the most basic accountability issues: is this what we, our students, or our community should be content with? Is this all we are capable of? Can we defend these outcomes in light of performance-based funding? If not, how do we begin to acknowledge problems and improve our levels of performance and our emphasis on the tangible outcomes AB 1725 charges us with producing?

External or "CC Critics" Model

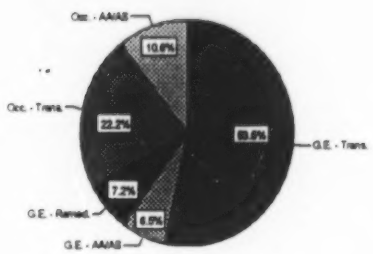
If the "CC Family" model generally consists of the access, retention, transfer, occupational, degree/certificate, and remediation measures (and other related ones) discussed above, then what might those outside the California Community Colleges use to gauge our effectiveness? Using the new publicly-available MIS data that is published statewide, and using local college reports, what analyses might be made of the cost-effectiveness of the community colleges in meeting the state's mission priorities of transfer, occupational and remedial education? Could those external to our segment, even those critical of the community colleges, develop an alternative model, a "cost per outcome" model, to determine exactly what we are providing for the $3 billion annual state investment in our colleges? The answer is "Yes, they can," and using just the widely available data discussed above, here is what such a model might look like.

To begin to determine a cost-per-outcome figure, one only needs to begin with some simple, understandable baseline figures. Again using our own college as a model, we wanted to answer how much money from our college's budget could be considered as addressing the missions of transfer, occupational or remedial education. Using the information on course enrollments and section counts, and using Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code and Uniform Course Number (UCN) designations as to whether courses were primarily transfer, occupational, remedial, or general education (non-transfer), we determined that of all course enrollments in Fall 1995, 54% were transfer (general ed.), 33% were occupational(non-transfer and transfer level), 6% were general education (non-transfer), and 7% were remedial. Interestingly, College X's sister colleges have more transfer course enrollments and fewer occupational enrollments.

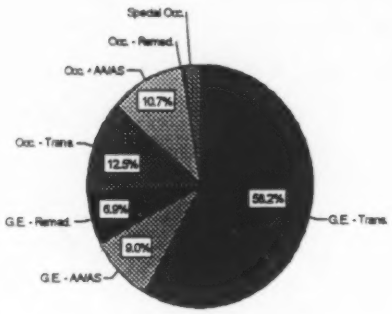
College Y



College X

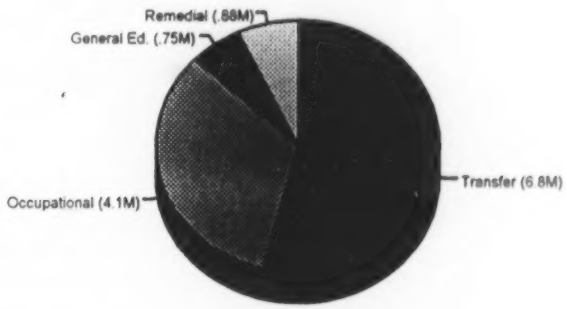


College Z



Similar percentages resulted when numbers of offered course sections were analyzed, but we felt the student enrollments were a closer match to the college's "overall effort" in these areas. Once we determined the relative proportions, we needed to figure out the costs of providing the instruction in these four areas. Using round numbers, College X's overall budget is approximately $25 million annually. If we assume that at least 50% of that budget is devoted to instruction (due to E.C. §84362(d), the "50% law"), then College X spends roughly $12.5 million in instruction. Using our previous proportions as expressed on the pie chart, we find the following:

Budget Related to Instruction (~12.5M)



Of course, the various outcome groups are not mutually exclusive, since a single student may receive a certificate, then an associate degree, and finally decide to transfer on to a university. Using our previous figures regarding our tangible outcomes, here are our cost-per-outcome figures:

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Transfer: With 380 College X transfers to UC and CSU reported by CPEC in 1993-94, we divided the $6.8 million by the 380 transfers to get $17,894 per transfer outcome. Using our rough "56 or more transferable units completed" transfer readiness measure generated 334 students for a figure of $20,359 per transfer-ready student. It is interesting to note that the cost is higher for producing the transfer-ready student, since there are fewer of them, than for the CPEC-counted transfers, suggesting that a number of students transfer without earning the requisite 56 transferable units. This may be due to students being UC or CSU eligible from high school (thus needing few, if any, community college units), or to students earning their required units at several community colleges. (For an extensive discussion of before- and after-transfer performance of Los Rios District transfers to UC Davis and to CSU Sacramento, based on a longitudinal research study, see *Moving On: A Cooperative Study of Student Transfer*, April 1991, by Jones, Lee, Brazil, Yaklin, Sharp and Helland.)

Occupational: Here we used our most recent (1995) *Measures of Progress* occupational student follow-up study (see previous discussion). There were 183 survey respondents employed in their occupational field prior to coming to College X, and 386 reported being employed in their field after attending College X, yielding 203 "job earners." Pooling them with the 156 students who said their job was directly or closely related to courses completed at College X, the 49 who said College X courses "helped them obtain a job," the 90 that were helped "to perform on their present job," and the 42 who were helped "to advance on their job" gives a total of 540 clearly documented (though possibly duplicated) occupational outcomes. Critics will note that the 540 is low since by definition not everyone responds to a survey; in this case, the response rate was 38%. A higher response rate with more reported outcomes would mean a lower cost. Dividing the $4.1 million devoted to occupational education instruction at College X by those 540 students provides a cost of $7,593 per occupational outcome.

Degrees/Certificates: As discussed previously, College X granted 408 degrees and 259 certificates in 1994-95. This total of 667 degree/certificate outcomes we divided into the entire $12.5 million instructional budget figure, since all instructional areas (occupational, transfer, general education, and remedial) contribute to students earning degrees and certificates. The result was $18,740 per degree and certificate outcome.

Remediation: Adding all those Fall 1991 cohort students who successfully progressed from remedial to college-level classes over the four years studied, we find 266 students (with some duplication possible) to divide into the $880,000 expended on remedial instruction at College X, for a figure of $3,308 per remedial outcome.

Retention: As an added piece, we took the average 50% of all College X students who stay from fall to spring against the 12,885 College X students in Fall 1994, giving us 6,443 as the 50% retained in Spring 1995. Using the $12.5 million for instructional costs produces a figure of $1,940 per one semester retention. Figuring an average of about four years to transfer (based on our *Moving On* cooperative transfer study), we spend roughly $16,000 to retain a student until they transfer, not far from the $17,894 we got above when using the CPEC transfer figures.

So the "CC Critics" model we posit could produce the following: almost $18,000 per transfer outcome, almost $19,000 per degree/certificate outcome, about $8,000 per occupational outcome, and $3,308 per remedial outcome. Shocking? Maybe. But consider this: the CSU system gets approximately $7,000 per student and it takes their students close to six years to graduate with a baccalaureate degree. Their graduation rate is approximately 50% (52% at CSUS). So if a student needs six years to graduate ($42,000), and only half of them do, that increases the cost per degree at CSU to $84,000. The UC system reportedly receives approximately $8,000 per student, but they graduate in four to five years and reportedly 80% graduate (82% at UCD as found in our *Moving On: A Cooperative Study of Student Transfer*), for a cost of between $40,000 to $50,000 per UC graduate. The high cost per CSU graduate may be one of the best-kept secrets in the state educational policy arena.

Beyond the "CC Critics" model lie additional state-level cost analyses that can be done, such as an "intersegmental comparison cost" model (e.g., Community Colleges *vs.* UC cost of instruction for the first two years given their giant classes taught by TAs or lecturers), or a "CCs *vs.* private vocational schools" cost-per-outcome model (albeit one would have to ignore the fact that private schools control their "inputs" by accepting primarily those with a reasonable chance of success). Each of these analyses brings with it a concomitant set of policy questions: would the UC and CSU systems consent to becoming open-admissions institutions? Could community colleges provide open access to the college but limit access to particular programs to those actually prepared to benefit from instruction offered, as is the case in private vocational schools? Do these alternatives constitute wiser expenditures of limited public funds?

Conclusions

What we have attempted to provide is a serious look at accountability models, including those we have developed ourselves within the community colleges, those developed externally by the Legislature (though often with our help), and some that could be developed by analysts in a wide variety of agencies with varying agendas, using only easily-available public data and reports.

Our conclusions lead us to the following observations and suggestions:

* We need to work with both internal and external models, looking not only at "friendly, comfortable" outcomes data, but at outcomes data our critics might use.

* We need to recognize that the data for outcomes analyses is widely available. Even if the data submitted by the colleges is inaccurate, if it's on the MIS or published, it's available to the critics as well as the "family." Outcomes information also needs to be effectively tied to the student goal information, at both local and statewide levels.

* We need to acknowledge our weaknesses. Where outcomes don't meet expectations, analyze why, develop plans to address problems, and research and report our results.

* We should determine what the community colleges do well and what we don't do well. With what kinds and levels of students are we successful? For those we're not successful with, who else should serve them? Both the Master Plan Commission and the Commission on Innovation had ideas in these areas; could they work?

* We need to prepare for debate on alternatives already under discussion:

- Performance-based funding (when and how?)

- Academic standards for entrance to community colleges (a high school diploma? some level above elementary-school-level skills?)

- A level beneath which the community colleges don't offer instruction (the Master Plan Commission debated this; is it time now?)

- The appropriate roles of non-credit adult basic education and community services in meeting remedial education and ESL needs

- Expanding admissions eligibility percentages for UC and CSU from one-eighth and one-third to accommodate more freshmen and sophomores

- Community colleges as technical institutes, devoted to workplace preparation (as in some other states)

- Community colleges as sole providers of first two years of collegiate instruction, with UC and CSU concentrating on upper division, graduate levels

- Community colleges doing all university-level remediation for CSU and UC students on their campuses (the Sacramento City College/UC Davis model)

- Mandated prerequisites and assessment test results for course placement; exit exams (by course, by department, by college?)

Finally, we need to acknowledge that our current funding mechanism is a major obstacle to quality outcomes. The California Community Colleges are currently funded on production of weekly student contact hours (WSCH); this is our outcome and we produce lots of it. We chase WSCH to improve our income. There is no fiscal incentive to produce other outcomes: the student who attends full time and gets barely passing grades in largely remedial courses produces the same income to the college as the student who attends the same amount of time and receives a degree, gets a job, or transfers. In fact, we may be producing WSCH to the detriment of more important outcomes.

Given the low level at which we produce tangible outcomes such as transfer, employment, degrees or certificates, performance-based funding may well be an idea whose time has come. Such funding could provide the necessary incentive for improved outcomes. Phasing performance-based funding in over several years, while the MIS data gets better and the performance measures are fine-tuned, is the responsible course of action for the Legislature to adopt. Incentive, not punishment, is the approach that will lead to better education for all students. But most of all, we in the community colleges need to educate ourselves about our "outcomes," and if we don't like what we see, begin the work of changing what we are doing and how we are doing it. After all, our students will be the chief beneficiaries of higher standards and improved outcomes. Performance-based funding may give us the push, but it is we who must walk the miles to the horizon of institutional and student excellence.

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